

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Dani Southard
Director, Northern Rockies
National Forest Foundation
p: 208-720-0957
dsouthard@nationalforests.org



Kurt Nelson, Ketchum District Ranger
Sawtooth National Forest, US Forest Service
p: 208-622-5371
kurt.nelson@usda.gov

Mindi Rambo, Public Affairs Specialist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
p: 208-378-5720
mindi.rambo@usda.gov

The Bald Mountain Stewardship Project Selected for Funding from the USDA Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership Program

January 26, 2021 — Blaine County, ID

The Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project, as part of the Bald Mountain Stewardship Project was selected for the highly competitive, national Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Program funding. \$643,975 will be made available in 2022 for forest health priorities on both Forest Service and private lands in the Wood River Valley. Additional funding will follow over the next two years for a 3-year project investment of \$2.5 million.

The Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project includes efforts to address forest health and reduce fire risk on and around Bald Mountain involving targeted thinning of dead or dying trees, reforestation, non-native invasive plant reduction, and improvement of wildlife habitat. Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Program funding will also provide cost-share opportunities for landowners wishing to carry out similar work on private lands along the main Wood River Valley corridor.

A diverse public – private group and partnership was convened and facilitated by the National Forest Foundation (NFF) beginning in 2015, following the 2013 Beaver Creek Fire which threatened communities in the Wood River Valley. "The community has worked hard to envision this project and has invested significantly to bring it to fruition. The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership is a nationally competitive program and we are excited to see this locally-built project elevated to a national level" said Dani Southard with the National Forest Foundation

"This is a great opportunity for our community partners to demonstrate our commitment and ability to tackle landscape-wide resource management initiatives across boundaries. We have made good progress to reduce fuel loads and improve forest health on the Bald Mountain Ski Area over the past several years, and we need to continue with that effort where future wildfires threaten our communities. Ecological restoration is a key consideration as changing climate affects how and where we live," said Kurt Nelson, Ketchum District Ranger for the Sawtooth National Forest.

"We are excited that the Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project was selected for Joint Chief's funding," said Amie Miller, Acting Idaho State Conservationist for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "The

strong partnership between private landowners and local, state and federal agencies here allows for the type of cross-boundary stewardship that makes deep impacts on forest health while reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfires that are so costly to Idaho communities.”

This Project is the product of more than five years of robust community and interagency collaboration through the 5B Restoration Coalition, which originally formed in 2015 following a catastrophic wildfire event in the Wood River Valley. Since that time, the group has focused on projects and initiatives that improve forest health, wildlife habitat, public land restoration efforts, and recreational enhancement. To date, more than 60 individuals and organizations have engaged through the coalition and have collectively contributing more than 500 hours toward project planning and volunteerism. Participation includes private landowners, local conservation/recreation organizations, local businesses, Cities of Ketchum, Sun Valley, and Hailey, Blaine County, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Lands, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NFF, US Forest Service and NRCS to collaborate with agricultural producers and private landowners to invest in conservation and restoration at a large enough scale to make a difference. Working in partnership, and at this extensive landscape scale, helps reduce wildfire threats, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species across landscapes. This year, USDA’s Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) selected only 17 new projects across the county.

###

About the Sawtooth National Forest

The Sawtooth National Forest is a place of inspiring beauty and contrasting landscapes. National forest lands stretch from the “basin and range” of northern Utah to the lofty peaks of the Idaho Rockies and the headwaters of the legendary “River of No Return.” This diversity is coupled with a contrast in seasons creating winter wonders and summer scenes. The forest is home for deer, elk, mountain goats and bighorn sheep. Gray wolves, wolverines, black bear, salmon, and many species of birds also thrive here. Trails, campgrounds, Wilderness, rivers, and scenic drives give visitors plenty of opportunities to connect with this special land. Learn more at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sawtooth/>

About the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency, and contribute to the nation’s broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender

About the National Forest Foundation

The National Forest Foundation promotes the enhancement and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System. By directly engaging Americans and leveraging private and public funding, the NFF improves forest health and Americans' outdoor experiences. The NFF's programs inform millions of Americans about the importance of these treasured landscapes. Each year, the NFF restores fish and wildlife habitat, plants trees in areas affected by fires, insects, and disease, improve recreational opportunities, and enables communities to steward their National Forests and Grasslands. Learn more at www.nationalforests.org